

Sermon at the beginning of Dekapentavgousto

His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia

Taken from the Supplicatory Service to the Theotokos 02/08/2026

Your Graces, our beloved Father Eusebios of the monastery of Pantanassa, Reverend Fathers, beloved scripture teachers from our state schools, presidents and members of our GOYouth and Sofia fellowship groups of NSW, students from our Orthodox Day schools, and Sunday schools, my dear children...

With hearts full of reverence and thanksgiving, our holy Church has called us together this evening, at the start of the blessed month of August; a month which the Orthodox Church lovingly dedicates to the most holy Mother of God, the blessed Theotokos. We sing praises with one voice for the one who is more honoured than the Cherubim, and incomparably more glorious than the Seraphim. Throughout these sacred days, the Church invites us into a different brief light. She calls us to fasting, prayer, to contemplation, and above all, to gather each evening for these beautiful services, preparing our hearts for the glorious and life-giving feast of the Dormition.

One might ask, *“why does the Church devote an entire fortnight to the mother of God? Why does she place Panagia before us, day after day during the month of August?”* The answer to these questions, lies at the very heart of our faith, indeed, at the very heart of our salvation. We honour the most holy Theotokos, because it was through her that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, and the Hope of all humanity, came into the world for our salvation. It was through her that the eternal Son and Word of God, who is before all ages, took flesh from her, becoming truly human without ceasing to be truly God, so that through Him we might be reconciled to the Father and receive the gift of eternal life.

St Paul expresses this profound mystery with extraordinary beauty when he writes, *“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”*

«⁴ ὅτε δὲ ἦλθεν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου, ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός, γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον, ⁵ ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον ἐξαγοράσῃ, ἵνα τὴν υἰοθεσίαν ἀπολάβωμεν.»

In these few words, the entire mystery of our salvation is revealed. The Apostle speaks of the fullness of time, that sacred moment, in the unfolding of God's eternal plan, when all His loving preparation reached its fulfilment in the free response of the Virgin Mary.

Throughout the centuries God has made Himself known, to the world through His chosen people. Through the law, the Prophets, and the righteous men and women of the Old Testament, patiently preparing humanity for, and awaiting its acceptance of, the promised Messiah.

So profound was His respect for the dignity of the human person, that He refused to condemn humanity's salvation. Choosing instead, to await patiently for a free and loving response. And indeed, the fullness of the time reached its fulfilment, when humanity in the person of the Most Holy Theotokos, was finally able to offer God a wholehearted and joyful “Yes”. To

His pre-eternal plan, that through His only-begotten Son, the world might be restored to communion with Him and share in the eternal blessedness of His kingdom. Through her free and life-giving “Yes”, Christ, the light of the world, the hope of the nations and the Saviour of all humanity, came and dwelt among us, the uncontainable one Who is contained within the womb of Mary. And in this way, life enters death, so that death itself might become the doorway to everlasting life.

This is why the Church never ceases to honour the Mother of God. Not because she sought greatness, honour, or glory, but precisely she sought only to fulfil the will of God. An example of what it means to respond wholeheartedly to our Lord’s love, and to be united to His Divine Will. Of what it means to allow Christ to dwell within us, so that our lives may become a living expression of His presence and grace.

My beloved sisters and brothers, sons and daughters, the “Yes” of the Most Holy Theotokos is not merely an event belonging to the distant past. It is the pattern and vocation of every Christian life, just like Mary, we all are called to freely invite Christ to be born and dwell within us. Just as she entrusted herself completely to the Will of God, so too are we called each day to entrust our lives into the hands of our loving Lord with confidence, freedom, and joy. Only in surrendering ourselves to Christ, do we discover the freedom for which we are created, the peace for which our hearts long and the fullness of life for which every human soul yearns.

The world today constantly convinces us that fulfilment is found in self-sufficiency, worldly success, and the pursuit of fleeting desires. Yet, the Gospel proclaims a very different truth: Life without Christ is death. Whereas even death with Christ becomes the gateway to life everlasting. This is precisely what the Church would proclaim on the Dormition Feast of the Virgin Mother. Namely, that in her falling asleep she was translated into life. Apart from Him, the human heart gradually withers regardless of its worldly achievements. United with Him, however, that is when He comes to make His home within us. Suffering is transfigured into hope. Every fall becomes an occasion for grace. And death itself is robbed of its sting, opening instead into the endless horizons of eternity, and an inexhaustible joy of the Kingdom of God where all things are filled with the fragrance of Paradise.

As we begin these blessed days of the Dormition Fast, let us ask the Most Holy Theotokos, to teach us to offer our all-joyful “Yes” to God.

May she help us to entrust our lives without reservation to her beloved Son, knowing that He alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Indeed, transformed by the birth and presence of Christ within, we shall begin even now to taste the life of the age to come. Until that blessed day when together with the Mother of God and all the Saints, and our Saint and Protector St Paisios, we might rejoice forever in the resplendent light, the unapproachable glory, the joy and love of the Holy Trinity, to whom is due all glory, honour, and worship. Amen.

GREEK TRANSLATION as follows:

May the Holy Trinity preserve us all.

Good evening, and a blessed Feast of the Dormition to everyone.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the Hierarchs who are with us: His Grace Bishop Elpidios of Perth, His Grace Bishop Kyriakos of Melbourne, His Grace Bishop Iakovos of Miletoupolis, His Grace Bishop Christodoulos of Magnesia, and His Grace Bishop Christophoros of Kerasounta.

I also thank all of you: the fathers, the principals and teachers of our schools, the students, Mr Magdalopoulos, the Director of the Greek Welfare Centre of New South Wales, and everyone here in Sydney.

May you all have a blessed Feast of the Dormition.

The Feast of the Dormition will truly be blessed if, in our lives, we do the will of God.

We heard in the Gospel where Christ says, "Blessed are those who hear..." But the Gospel does not stop there. For all of us hear, yet hearing alone is not enough. The Gospel continues with great emphasis and says, "...blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it."

Those who hear it and keep it. These are the ones who are truly blessed. Those who hear and keep the will of God. Blessed are those who hear and keep the words and the teaching of the Gospel.

And if we do this, then we shall be blessed, and we shall have a truly blessed Feast of the Dormition.

I pray that the Most Holy Theotokos may be the protector and helper of us all. Amen.